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"Serious Fictions: telling and remembering stories about the Tocumwal houses"

SUB-THESIS

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ABSTRACT

PERFORMING OBJECTS: research into the constructive processes of inhabiting. The work employs installation and performance based practice to explore the social and physical processes of inhabiting, addressing the inherent tenuousness of these processes and focusing on instances of rupture, destabilisation and excess. The Sub-thesis - *Serious Fictions: telling and remembering stories about the Tocumwal houses* - uses the example of the Tocumwal House Stories to argue that constructing narratives - telling - is a fundamental part of the inhabiting process whilst simultaneously articulating its instability, it explores the tenuousness of settlement within the Australian context and the function of stories as memorial objects. A study taking the form of an exhibition of installation and performance documentation exhibited at the Canberra School of Art Foyer Gallery and Photospace from September 13 to 16 2000 which comprises the outcome of the Studio Practice component (66%), together with a Sub-thesis (33%), and the Report which documents the nature of the course of study undertaken.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, ... (20/10/00) hereby declare that the thesis here presented is the outcome of the research project I have undertaken during my candidacy, that I am the sole author unless otherwise indicated, and that I have fully documented the source of ideas, references, quotations or paraphrases attributable to other authors.

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Introduction

"Out in Western New South Wales a town/suburb of houses were built as a decoy city during World War Two. They were lit up at night to deceive Japanese bombers. The town was transferred to O'Connor (a suburb of Canberra) after the war."[1]

Tina Waring

In January 1942 the Japanese forces were moving south at a frightening pace and the Australian Government was extremely concerned that Japan was on the verge of invading Australia. In response to this perceived threat the government initiated a number of contingency plans. One of these plans was known as the Brisbane Line Strategy - it involved the drawing of an imaginary line between Brisbane and Melbourne. In the event of an invasion the Government would concentrate on saving the corner of Australia south and east of this line.

In order to defend this part of the country the Australian Allied Works Council and the USA Air Force built Australia's largest air base - known as the McIntyre Field - near the small country town of Tocumwal on the Murray River in New South Wales. This was to be a "last ditch" base from which heavy bombers would be able to defend the southeastern part of the country and conduct reconnaissance flights into occupied enemy territory.[2] The base had a number of special features, it was designed with the threat of air attack in mind; all the facilities were spread over twenty square kilometres to reduce the risk of losing all the resources in one go. The fibro and weatherboard accommodation huts were designed to look like domestic houses and some of the roads were constructed as "continuations of the streets of Tocumwal"[3] in order to disguise part of the road system and thus the base.

In May 1942, however, a series of contributing factors put a stop to the Japanese advance and the threat of invasion disappeared. The base was no longer needed for its original purpose.

As the Second World War came to an end the accommodation huts from the McIntyre Field became sought after in the massive national housing shortage that followed. Many

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[1] This quote from Tina Waring is one of a six of texts I have collected from contributors. For full accounts see appendix 1

[2] Nelmes, MV Tocumwal to Tarakan: Australians and the Consolidated B24 Liberator, Banner Books, 1994 p65

[3] Nelmes, ibid p65

of them were pulled down and transported to a number of locations. One such destination was hundreds of kilometres away in the Canberra suburb of O'Connor.

Apparently the houses were meant only as a temporary solution to a crisis situation, they were built without foundations, with the brick footings laid straight on to the ground.[4] Over the years the houses remained and have become an identifiable part of Canberra's inner northern suburbs. The O'Connor Precinct as it is now known, is significant for a number of reasons. These houses were placed in a unique configuration of two sets of four cul-de-sacs linked by a large open grassy section, which broke up the conventional street pattern of the suburb. The combination of the street plan and the group of similar looking houses gave the area a distinctive visual character. Over time this group of approximately a hundred houses has developed a strong sense of community and in recent years has been the subject of a local social history project documenting the histories of the precinct.[5]

My interest stems from a story I heard about the houses a number of years ago, which speculated on their history. It was the first of several stories I heard that were situated somewhere between, gossip, rumour and urban myth. These stories indicated a range of possible pasts for the houses. The first story I heard confused the name of the town Tocumwal and referred to the houses as the "Token War Houses".

In these stories the origins of the houses varied, they always came from somewhere far away, somewhere else - in outback NSW or near Darwin or Alice Springs. The consistent element being that the places, the points of origin for the houses were very different from Canberra. This ambiguity added to the *mythical* status of the stories - they were exotic. The accounts of why the houses existed were also varied, in some the houses were decoys, lit up at night to attract the Japanese bombers away from civilisation and *real* targets. According to another version the houses had been part of an army resettling camp, interim accommodation where soldiers returning from the war stayed. Yet another account claimed that the houses were kit homes that had originally been brought here from Norway.

The first time I heard one of these stories it stayed with me for weeks, it sounded fantastic, too strange to be true and yet, there was something about it that niggled at me. In my mind's eye I could see houses lining dusty roads - marooned in the middle of a dry

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[4] Hutchison, M, *Stories of other Canberras - the Tocumwal houses archive* in The Canberra Review, March/April 1997

[5] The project, coordinated by Mary Hutchison is an archive of texts, voice recordings and images contributed by the inhabitants of the area.

plain, the only other points of reference, occasional trees amongst clumps of grey grass. I imagined their interiors as shelters for scuttling creatures, lights coming on as the day wore out, naked light bulbs illuminating the dust settled in the corners and spider webs arching from wall to ceiling. I also had a clear picture of the houses on the back of trucks heading South and East, thundering across a vast landscape, dots on the horizon becoming larger, encountering mountains and other towns, winding through wooded hills and across green farmland. I had to know more.

These stories interested me because they cast the houses as decoys and protective devices, as fictional/deceptive objects which play a role in the protection of the nation. They were also fascinating because they had travelled. There was something powerful in this idea of houses that could simply be picked up and moved, something unstable, tenuous. I wanted to investigate the preoccupations of the storytellers and explore their interpretations of this story. How could these travelling houses be bound up in the claiming of space and creation of place, and understood in relation to notions of the tenuous settlement of Australia by migrants? I was also interested in unravelling the relationship between individual houses as homes and the idea of houses as symbols, and devices that have a place in the mythology and memorialisation of World War II. Hearing these stories made me begin to think about the process of story telling as part of a larger process of constructing and inhabiting the places we live in.

This paper discusses the written texts provided by six contributors - six individuals. The stories are slender narratives, they by no means represent a broad sector of the population. This is neither a sociological survey nor a History of the Tocumwal houses, rather it is an investigation into the constructive process of inhabiting using the Tocumwal House stories as a point of departure. The following paper addresses three main issues circulating around the stories about the Tocumwal houses: the role of narrative in the constructive process of inhabiting; the notion of tenuous settlement in Australia and, the operation of the stories as memorial objects.

The first chapter refers to specific Tocumwal house stories - contributed by Noel Quanchi, Leeanne Crisp, Anne McNevin and Simon Gain - exploring the relationship between inhabiting and telling. Using Heidegger's notion of dwelling I argue that *telling* is a fundamental part of the dwelling process. I then relate this concept to the Australian context using Paul Carter's argument that acts of writing and telling were used by colonial settlers in Australia to construct the places they inhabited.

I refer to the Tocumwal house stories variously as popular narrative and gossip. My use of the term *gossip* is informed by Don Miller's discussion of gossip and rumour in

Neighbours and Strangers. Defining the term gossip, Miller says it is a form of communication that occurs in an inherently chaotic way between neighbours.[6] The Tocumwal house stories are closer to gossip than anything else, they are belonging stories, stories that construct a past, an exotic past for the people who live locally to own.

In the second chapter I argue that while the Tocumwal house stories are inhabiting tales, they also articulate a certain tenuousness of settlement that is an inherent part of the dwelling process. The Tocumwal stories are "slender narratives"[7] and "serious fictions"[8], they articulate gaps, absences and a sense of instability. In this chapter Paul Carter's discussion of convict myths provides an historical context to my argument. It is particularly relevant because Carter is discussing the early inhabiting processes of the convicts, he is interested in unofficial narratives and how they provide us with alternative viewpoints from which to look at and construct histories.

Carter finds unofficial histories embedded in official ones and in partial accounts such as diaries and letters. Because my subject is contemporary I have sought to collect texts directly from the storytellers. In asking them to write down their tales I upset their inhabiting process by asking them to stop, record and observe. The tellers of the stories enact their inhabiting by telling, simultaneously articulating the tenuousness of their inhabitance, worrying over gaps and absences in some cases, and lamenting a perceived lack of history.

In the third chapter I introduce the idea that the stories operate as memorial objects. Through telling, the bearers of these tales invoke the Second World War, a time of instability when Australia as a nation was literally under threat. The Tocumwal house stories remind us of what might have been - what almost happened - they memorialise an event that did not occur; the McIntyre Field was never used for the purpose intended because the Japanese did not invade. Telling is also part of the process of constructing identity, the storytellers are talking about themselves and their place in the communities they live in. In telling these stories they are also pondering the concept of national identity, they are remembering a moment when Australia as a nation was under threat.

I will tease out the differences between the Tocumwal house stories and actual war memorials, places that officially commemorate those who died in war and particular sites;

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[6] Miller, D, Neighbours and Strangers Rainbow Publishers Ltd, Ahmedabad, Calcutta, Delhi, 1999 p13

[7] Bhabha, H, "By Bread Alone: Signs of Violence in the Mid-Nineteenth Century" in The Location of Culture, p198 Routledge, London and New York 1994

[8] Clifford, J, The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England 1988 p10

"*lieux de mémoire*"[9] where significant events occurred. I refer here to Pierre Nora's discussion of the concept *les lieux de memoire.* Nora argues that "there are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of memory."[10] I will explore Nora's definition of this term and argue that the Tocumwal house stories provide evidence of the existence of a *community of memory*, which operates as a space for multiple viewpoints and alternate histories.

The Tocumwal houses were not literally part of a significant event, they represent something that did not happen. Yet the stories prompt us to remember. The stories themselves operate as unofficial memorial objects - circulating organically from mouth to mouth, they keep the memory alive. The houses provide a physical point of reference, a strong visual that can be used to inspire the imagination of the viewer. These memorials come to us, we do not need to visit them on ANZAC day or leave flowers at them. These stories are part of the daily process of remembering - war, the past, our own histories, the tenuousness of our connection to place - that all form part of our dwelling processes.

[9] Nora, P "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémeoire* in Representations 26 Spring 1989 The University of California Press, p7
[10] Nora, P Ibid p7

CHAPTER 1

Dwelling and Telling

I grew up in a small country town called Finley which is 20 Kilometres north of the township of Tocumwal in the southern Riverina of NSW.

As a youngster we would travel through Toc as it was known on our way to Melbourne, in the distance you could see the old Aircraft Hangers to the Air field that is now used for a gliding school. You would also pass [the] Fuel Depot that stored Aviation Fuel. My father told me that was one of the largest Air Bases used up until the end of WW2 and was instrumental in the protection of Australia from the Japanese. I do not know how true this was but it makes a good story that a father can tell there [sic] son.[11]

Noel Quanchi

Noel's story is unique in this collection because Noel has connections to both Canberra and Tocumwal. The absent base forms part of his childhood, he used to go there on school holidays and hang around the gliding club hoping to get free rides up in the aeroplanes that towed the gliders. It was that one line "but it makes a good story that a father can tell there [*sic*] son" which was particularly significant. In my minds eye I could see that father glancing out over the landscape as he drove, spinning yarns that made the view out there belong to the people driving by in the car. Noel grew up with a specific story about the past of that place, his father in relaying the story to his son was constructing a place and a memory. Telling stories is a fundamental part of the process of inhabiting space.

In order to investigate how stories play a part in the construction of inhabitable spaces it is necessary to first define what is meant by the phrase *process of inhabiting*.

In the Oxford Dictionary of Current English the word **inhabit** is defined as " dwell in; occupy"[12]. I use the word inhabit as a verb - a word that expresses an activity. Inhabiting is not simply a matter of being passively present, we must do in order to inhabit. We construct and define spaces, build buildings and then inhabit the spaces we have constructed by cooking, cleaning, sleeping and engaging in social interactions.

[11] For full transcript of Noel's story see appendix 2
[12] Oxford Dictionary of Current English, Oxford University Press, New York 1992 p454

In his essay "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," Heidegger outlines his notion of "dwelling"[13]. He looks to etymology to draw out the relationship between *building* and *dwelling*, his main point being "man *is* insofar as he dwells"[14]. Heidegger makes this claim after discussing precisely what he means when he uses the word *dwells*; "Now, what does *bauen*, to build mean? The Old High German word for building, *buan*, means to dwell. This signifies to remain, to stay in a place."[15]

When Heidegger says "man *is* insofar as he *dwells*" he is arguing that dwelling and building are closely interlinked - in his own words:

> 1. Building is really dwelling, 2. Dwelling is the manner in which mortals are on earth, 3. Building as dwelling unfolds into the building that cultivates growing things and the building that erects buildings. . .We do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell, that is because we are *dwellers*.[16]

Dwelling is for Heidegger, a fundamental part of being human. He describes dwelling as encompassing two kinds of building - "cultivation of growing things and erecting edifices"[17]. Earlier he argues that cultivating is not constructing,

> Such building only takes care - it tends the growth that ripens into its fruit of its own accord. Building in the sense of preserving and nurturing is not making anything.[18]

We are dwellers - we build continuously - erecting houses, structures, edifices, then we perform the building that is cultivating and maintaining. Where Heidegger makes the distinction that this is "not making anything" I would disagree and for my own purposes redefine this second type of building as a continuous renovating, making something all the time in order to maintain a sense of stability. Renovation also implies a never ending process; as opposed to a word such as restoration which implies an attempt to return, to *restore* something to its *original* state. The word implies movement, transformation and renewal. If you renovate a house, there is nothing to stop you renovating it again and again. Each new inhabitant may add and remove until they have an object that best suits their needs and preoccupations, for me this ties in neatly with the project of inhabiting.

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[13] Heidegger, M, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" in Basic Writings, New York : Harper & Row, c1977 p323
[14] Heidegger, M, Ibid, 325
[15] Heidegger, M, Ibid, 324
[16] Heidegger, M, Ibid, 326
[17] Heidegger, M, Ibid, 325
[18] Heidegger, M, Ibid, 325

To Heidegger's two forms of building (constructing edifices and cultivating) I am adding a third - Telling.

Dwelling is not performed in isolation, it is a social activity. We dwell in groups, and in building we construct social dwelling places; we tell, talk, narrate our social and physical environments constantly. We tell each other about the places we inhabit, we construct histories and gossip about the neighbours.

Instead of thinking about space as some kind of pre-existing void that we fill, Heidegger argues that space is contingent upon our dwelling. Susan Best takes up his point and adds:

> space is figured as what moves, fills or flows into a framework or limits, not as is more usually the case, as the already existing container of our actions. Space then is the result of our actions (most particularly our building) and some corresponding force which comes into its own, if and when these actions are appropriate.[19]

Telling is a way of making space - both physical and conceptual - creating the boundaries and limits in social relationships. Telling is a constructive process. Language and talk shape our perceptions and thus the physical world we build/inhabit/dwell in. Telling stories about where we live creates a connection to place, it is actually part of the process of constructing and inhabiting space. In telling stories we mark the landscape, make it readable and dig ourselves down into it, putting down roots. Noel tells the story of the Tocumwal airfield, the story his father told him as they drove along the highway. Noel's father was animating the world outside the car, making it his world, their world, a place with a past, and the traces of that past became visible to Noel, he was marking the land with a narrative, making it readable for his son. From then on Noel could imagine the former base on the site now marked by decaying foundations.

From the time of colonization onwards the new inhabitants of Australia have spent a great deal of time and effort discussing, describing and mapping the land. How we see the land and how we move through space are fundamentally linked to how we name, describe and discuss it. Paul Carter examines the significance of language in the construction of a spatial history of Australia. He claims that the "imperial" approach to constructing history casts the landscape - space - as a stage, more or less fixed, upon which events unfold.[20] Rather than following this approach Carter is interested in investigating how the

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[19] Best, S, "Substantial Reflections: The Video Sculptures of Joan Brassil" Eyeline 39 Autumn/Winter 1999

[20] Carter, P, The Road to Botany Bay: *An Essay in Spatial History*, Faber and Faber, London, Boston, 1987 pxvi

colonizers constructed their environment as they engaged in the process of exploring, claiming and settling the land. Furthermore Carter is interested in carrying out this investigation using inherently partial sources. When discussing documents produced by Australia's colonial settlers he states:

> For the historical significance of the explorers' journals and the settlers' diaries does not reside in any stylistic illusion of picturesque completeness . . . Quite the contrary, it is their open-endedness, their lack of finish, even their search for words, which is characteristic: for it is here, where forms and conventions break down, that we can discern the process of transforming space into place, the *intentional* world of texts, wherein lies their unrepeatability and their enduring, if hitherto ignored, historical significance. Such spatial history - history that discovers and explores the lacuna left by imperial history - begins and ends in language.[21]

The use of partial sources enables Carter to reveal the processes of construction carried out by the writers of the texts. He also claims that many of the settler's diaries were actually written retrospectively. For Carter this is not simply because the settlers were busy and did not have time to write - he sees this as an indication that the land was not merely a stage upon which history was performed, the settlers had to construct a space to inhabit. They needed to travel over the land, clear it, define it, invent landmarks and see them in relation to each other. The process of travelling across and simultaneously naming and describing thus brought the *place* into being for the settlers. The settlers' accounts then became textual constructions through which others could access the land.

The Tocumwal house stories are spoken textual constructions. The story Noel tells, the one his father told him, is inherently partial. Noel himself says that he does not know if it is true, yet it has shaped his perception of a place and in repeating the story he continues to construct and inhabit that place.

By *telling* the stories the tellers raise a series of issues, voice specific interests and concerns, they muse about the significance of having or lacking History, they share stories as a way of telling about themselves. They are saying - this is where I live - this is my story and it connects me to this place, I have put down roots here. For Leeanne Crisp feeling a connection to some houses through a story she had been told helped her to feel *at home* in a place in which she was initially uncomfortable. She could then retell, renovate, and inscribe this unfamiliar place with her own memories, using the houses as a visual reference point, something physical which could then be associated with childhood memories and family myths. Telling the story brings Leeanne's history *here* and she sees Canberra through the lens of her memories and family relationships.

Leeanne talks of family visits to Victoria as a child and the memory of her grandmother's house, this wooden house was a significant part of her childhood. Later in life she visited Norway and noticed similar domestic architecture. She felt a connection with that country as there was a family story that her "maternal great grandfather had been a Norwegian sailor who had jumped ship and stayed in Australia."[22] This Norwegian connection is particularly important to her as the other side of her family has German ancestry. She wrote:

> Our German surname from my father's grandparents was always coloured for me with a subtle prejudice. The [Norwegian] houses represented an 'architectural connection' with this other side of the family.
>
> Then in Canberra they were also in the next suburb. Someone told me the story, that these kit houses in fact had been imported from Norway. I liked this as there seemed to be a material connection here for me. For a long time I felt displaced in Canberra because we have no relatives here. But I felt a connection to the houses.

The physical objects provide a locus for Leeanne's memories and stories, she inhabits, narrates her surroundings by pulling important elements from her past into the local present. Through telling Leeanne creates a sense of homeliness in her immediate surroundings.

Anne McNevin and Simon Gain are two other people who have stories to tell about the Tocumwal houses[23]. They shared one as students. Their stories, gossipy narratives speculate on the idea that the houses were built in the form of a town somewhere far away; the Northern Territory. Anne says that the houses were built in Darwin, Simon's account situates them somewhere near Alice Springs. I will discuss the discrepancies further in the second section, for now I am more interested in the elements these two stories have in common.

I have described Anne's and Simon's stories as gossip for a reason. All the Tocumwal house stories are popular narratives - gossipy - in the sense that they speculate about a group of objects and as series of events. They are not fables or parables, yet they operate metaphorically. Gossip is frequently represented as petty, unnecessary, often spiteful and sometimes untrue. Gossip travels as does rumour, these are dynamic forms of narrative, popular and often existing fleetingly, binding people together, excluding others. The Tocumwal house stories are closer to gossip than anything else, while they are not speculation about neighbours, they are speculation about houses and the places people live, they are geographically situated. The people telling the stories about the houses do

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[21] Carter, P, Ibid pxxii
[22] For Leeanne's entire account see appendix 3

not necessarily live in them, however they may have done once, or they live locally and see the houses as part of their immediate environment.

In *Neighbours and Strangers* Don Miller says of gossip:

> It is news, news commentary and entertainment wrapped in one. Face-to-face infotainment. As with the genre at any level of manual or electronic production and transmission, it is both fact and fiction, true and false.[24]

Miller is interested in the dynamics of gossip and rumour within communities of neighbours. He describes the neighbourhood as an interesting zone existing between the *private* world of house and family and the *public* worlds of work, school etc. Miller sees the neighbourhood as a space of relaxed chaos - a space where people live with each other, tolerate each others differences with no set agenda or plan. A place where people live together without necessarily knowing or liking each other. Gossip is important in this context as it circulates through the community informally letting the neighbours know what is going on.

Both Anne and Simon say that the Tocumwal houses were built as decoys, a town lit up at night and intended to distract potential Japanese invaders from *real* targets.

Simon told Anne the story about the houses - he does not discuss it other than as a novelty - but he does pass the story on, it is interesting enough, entertaining enough to retell. Anne and Simon repeat the narrative as part of a continuous process of inhabiting. By telling, passing on stories they are performing the process, they are constructing that place in narrative form and claiming a connection with the place through the telling.

For Anne in particular it is important that the house in which she lives has a history, she wants a connection to the past. Commenting on what she perceives as "the lack of history in Canberra" she tells the story and repeats the process of inhabiting by telling. Anne takes up the trivial tale told by Simon as an aside and invests it with a greater significance, she personalises the narrative. In making it her own she re-enacts telling the story as part of her own process of inhabiting. The story is about where she lives, it is exotic, it makes the place she lives in interesting and significant, it connects that place to a past.

For Anne and Simon the story is very close, it is about their home, the house they live in. Even though Simon does not suggest why the story is interesting to him and he could not remember who told him the story he continues to pass it on. It is part of his telling about

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[23] For Anne and Simon's accounts see appendicies 4 & 5

the places he inhabits and part of a process of constructing that place. The narrative has its own dynamic, it moves from person to person creating these connections.

It is significant that these stories are about houses. Houses are where we live, whether they are in cities, towns or in the bush. Houses are what the settlers brought from Europe to a land of nomads who appeared to drift endlessly across the landscape. Houses were amongst other things, agents of colonisation, they made the settlers different from the indigenous people and attached them to the ground. The first fleet arrived with a prefabricated house on board[25]. Houses are the physical evidence of our dwelling.

One of the settlers' primary concerns when they first arrived in Australia was shelter, this brings me to a comment by Robin Boyd who stated that houses provided the settlers with a way of framing this foreign landscape and simultaneously, with an escape, a means of turning inwards. In his own colourful words; "In a land of rolling plains and wide blue skies, a race of cheerful agoraphobes grew up in little weather-sealed boxes."[26]. By framing the landscape the settlers domesticated it, they turned it into a view, fenced, farmed and built roads out into it. They created insides and thus an outside. They imported European processes of inhabitation. Houses are dwelling loci - "dynamic entities"[27] through which dwelling is enacted. They are closely linked to bodies and are often referred to in terms of them. Houses are spaces, zones of transition, and agents of socialisation, factual objects.

Houses, however have to be written about, not because they are durable, or factual or representative of histories but because they frame our social and physical worlds, they are our first environment, they are divided up into specific rooms which have specific functions. Our behaviour is informed by these divisions, we eat, sleep and wash in particular spaces, we consider parts of the house to be public and parts to be private. We learn to be social beings in houses. Our opinions and experiences differ depending on socio-economic, cultural and physical locations and experiences.

The Tocumwal houses are intriguing because of their ordinariness, they look so *normal*, yet they are linked to an exotic tale. They provide the tellers with a physical presence around which to construct their narratives, and paradoxically are constructed as imaginary objects as a result of the tales told about them. They are 'the Tocumwal Houses' because

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[24] Miller, D, Op cit p33
[25] Carter, P, Ibid, xiv
[26] Boyd, R Australia's Home
[27] Carsten, J and Hugh-Jones, S About the House: *Levi-Strauss and Beyond*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996 p37

of the stories. The stories do more, however than indicate a history and a claiming of space, they do more than turn the houses into exotic objects. The stories also articulate a *tenuousness* in the inhabiting process.

CHAPTER 2

Like tents or covered wagons . . .

"Real cities, as everyone knows, are made to last. They have foundations set firm in the earth. Weatherboard cities float above it on blocks or stumps. Weatherboard houses can be lifted if necessary, loaded on to the back of a lorry and set down again two suburbs or a thousand miles away. They have about them the impoverished air of tree houses."[28]

This passage from David Malouf's 12 Edmondstone St explains his father's dislike of the family home. The 'woodenness' of the house was an indication of tenuousness because it had not put down roots into the ground and was ultimately unstable.

For Malouf "First houses are the grounds of our first experience"[29] and 12 Edmondstone Street was his first physical landscape, the place he learnt about shape, scale, direction; about floors, windows, doors and invisible demarcations between spaces that are knowable and spaces that are 'off limits'. Yet the house Malouf describes "is no longer there"[30] it is present in his mind, held there by tricks of memory in a simultaneous state of pre, post and during dad's renovations.

The tenuousness Malouf articulates, is specifically associated with wooden houses - they have the potential to move - to be removed - and this is what makes his father nervous. We tend to think of houses as stable, solid environments, permanent objects. The absence of that house, the fact it no longer exists, adds to the sense of tenuousness. The house has literally disappeared. The Tocumwal house stories articulate similar preoccupations, the houses are fibro and weatherboard, they were brought here from elsewhere and could be easily removed. Absences also feature in the stories, Noel talks of the literal absence of the houses from the air field and Anne ponders the absence of history in Canberra. These issues of tenuousness and absence which are invoked in the stories of the Tocumwal houses are the focus of my investigation in this chapter.

In the introduction to About the House, Janet Carsten and Stephen Hugh-Jones discuss the language used by Levi-Strauss to describe the house, "how it 'solidifies' an unstable relation of alliance, or 'transfixes' irreconcilable oppositions reveals a tendency, shared

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[28] Malouf, D, 12 Edmondstone Street, Penguin Books, Victoria 1985 p10
[29] Malouf, ibid p8
[30] Malouf, ibid p3

by others, to see the house in static terms."[31] Carsten and Hugh-Jones go on to argue that;

> Houses are dynamic entities. Their vitality comes from a number of sources - most obviously from the people who live in them but also from the materials used in building, from life-giving rituals, or from the movement of the heavenly bodies which often determine their orientation.[32]

They consider houses and their inhabitants part of the "process of living".[33]

Houses are where our dwelling is enacted on a daily basis. Yet as Malouf, Carsten and Hugh-Jones indicate, houses, like stories are not fixed. Malouf's description of the instability of the wooden house hints at a wider tenuousness of settlement in Australia which the Tocumwal house stories also address. For Malouf the wooden house embodies this tenuousness. The process of houses and living presents, on the surface, a sense of stability, yet it is through continuous motion that we inhabit. It is only when that process/motion is interrupted or called into question that the instability, the contingency of inhabiting becomes apparent.

This is why the image of the Tocumwal houses on the back of trucks is so potent for me. Even though I know that the houses were dismantled down to their sides for transportation, I still see in my minds eye a line of trucks with entire houses on them driving off down the highway. The Tocumwal houses exist at an intersection of story, fact and myth. Their durability, stableness and typicalness is called into question by a slender narrative. Digging into the history of these houses throws up speculation and instability, multiple stories and viewpoints and the tenuousness of settlement, notions of permanence and ephemerality.

The settlement of Australia by its colonizers is inherently tenuous. Australia is a country full of absent houses and towns, a country of migrants who yearn for absent homelands and of places where indigenous people have literally been made absent. The image of a house on a truck conjures two responses in me. On the one hand the idea represents something akin to the covered wagons of the American pioneers, travelling out across an unfamiliar land, stopping to draw tight in protective circles, naming and claiming dwelling places. On the other hand there is this incredible sense of transience, that a house is no more than a box, that it can be picked up and put anywhere, and just as easily removed, turning anywhere into nowhere.

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[31] Carsten, J and Hugh-Jones, S, Op cit p37
[32] Carsten, J and Hugh-Jones, S, ibid p37
[33] Carsten, J and Hugh-Jones, S, ibid p46

The stories of the Tocumwal houses raise a number of issues and generate a series of interesting images which circulate around houses. These *slender narratives* touch lightly on the houses, using them as the locus for an exotic tale. Yet it is relevant that these stories are about houses. Houses are the sites of our dwelling, the places we live. In telling we inhabit, but the Tocumwal house stories also do something else - they articulate an awareness that inhabiting is not fixed - that it is a temporally contingent process.

The phrase *slender narrative* is borrowed from Homi Bhabha who asks the question "How is historical agency enacted in the slenderness of narrative?"[34] When he asks this question Bhabha is discussing the novel Beloved by Toni Morrison and reflecting on signs of peasant insurgency in nineteenth-century India. He goes on to ask:

> How do we historicize the event of the dehistoricized? If, as they say, the past is a foreign country, then what does it mean to encounter a past that is your own country reterritorialized, even terrorized by another.[35]

Bhabha describes Morrison's term "rememoration"[36] as turning:

> the present of narrative enunciation into the haunting memorial of what has been excluded, excised, evicted, and for that very reason becomes the *unheimlich* space for the negotiation of identity and history. 'A void may be empty but it is not a vacuum.[37]

The Tocumwal stories have not surfaced in a situation of peasant insurgency or in a community of displaced slaves; they are not part of that kind of narrative. Yet the tellers are inscribing in *the slenderness of narrative* their own preoccupations with a history, with the *void*, the gaps, the absences. By talking, telling these stories they are engaging in the construction of a social space and articulating their place within, or in relation to, that space.

The stories - slender narratives - are also "constructed domains of truth, serious fictions"[38]

This is a term used by James Clifford to describe ethnographic texts. In constructing such a text the writer must present a readable image, they must make sense of conflicting emotions and a number of events often occurring simultaneously. What they write is

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[34] Bhabha, H, Op cit p198
[35] Bhabha, H, ibid p198
[36] Bhabha, H, ibid p198
[37] Bhabha, H, ibid p198
[38] Clifford, J, Op cit p10

informed by their own frame of reference as much as by what they observe. He asks "What is always torn off, as it were to construct a public, believable discourse?[39]

Clifford discusses the case of Bronislaw Malinowski arguing that his official ethnographic text and his diaries are both serious fictions. They are written under particular circumstances and for specific purposes, each is constructed and edited, each contains information the other does not. Each is both true and false, each reflects Malinowski's own frame of reference and preoccupations yet they serve fundamentally different purposes and take different forms. The Tocumwal house stories are a series of individual accounts. The tellers take on an existing narrative, yet they alter the story to personalise it. In all of the stories something is *torn off* or added on, quite possibly, the tellers don't even realise this themselves. The differences in the stories reflect the differing investments of the tellers.

Part of my interest in asking the tellers to write down their stories was a curiosity on my part to see what they chose to write, and how much, which details. Spoken words are organic they are there briefly and gone, words on paper are far more permanent - they can be interrogated, compared with other words on paper, criticised and discredited. When I asked the Tocumwal house story tellers to write they were concerned that by writing they were claiming authority and could be left open to the charge of writing something that wasn't true. The fictional nature of their stories became an issue for them.

The Tocumwal house stories are *serious fictions* they articulate a desire for a history, they worry over the absences and gaps and they reflect individual inhabiting processes.

It was also my own concern about the literal slenderness of these narratives that led me to ask my informants to write down the stories of the Tocumwal houses - I needed some kind of concrete evidence - some proof that the stories did indeed exist. Asking for written documents then threw up another set of issues.

The first problem is that privileged historical information usually appears in the form of 'official' textual documents. One way historians work around the privileged status of the document has been to interview informants and work with oral histories. Why ask people to provide written documents? In the first instance popular narrative often exists fleetingly as a story told by word of mouth. I was attempting to catch traces of something that had already passed on, I think it is important to point out that these stories are partial texts, they are evidence, traces, they are not the original object themselves. I wanted to have in

[39] Clifford, Ibid p112-113

written form, something which would not ordinarily be granted the status of historical document. By asking people to write down their accounts I was asking them to see their stories as legitimate, worth recording. It is important to see how the accounts have been personalised. While all the informants were asked the same question - to write down what they knew about the history of the houses - they each provided a highly personal, distinctive account.

In collecting these partial accounts I am creating an interplay of texts to give a sense of continuously shifting ground. While walking across this terrain points of interest are encountered, tripped over, sighted on the horizon and explored as they crop up. These multiple view points reflect the inhabiting process of each individual. The stories themselves are tenuous - dynamic - mobile in their form. It is this slipperiness combined with the subject matter, which articulates the instability of the story teller's inhabiting.

By working with the stories as written texts I was imbuing them with a particular kind of authority, making them permanent, trapping the traces of an organic process as evidence of something happening. This is not to discount the authority of an oral narrative. Stories have their own agency - they spread through the community like fire through the bush - each teller, in personalising the story assumes their own authority and acts out their inhabiting process.

While many people have been interested in speculating about the Tocumwal houses to me they have generally been reluctant to write down what they think. Some of the story tellers considered their story a triviality and were concerned about not being fully informed or having all the facts. They couldn't write down what they had said to me because they really didn't 'know' anything. When I asked Tina for her account she initially told me that there was not much to tell and I should really ask the person who told her, they would be able to tell me more. She was also a bit shy because she had originally referred to the houses as the *Token War Houses* and subsequently realised that this was a mutation of the title *Tocumwal Houses.*

The tenuousness of narrative is bound up in these slippages - there is always the possibility of misinterpretation - or creative licence. The tellers of the stories construct a reality for themselves, they tailor it to suit their needs and preoccupations, this is why their realities can never be fixed or concrete. Inhabiting as I have said before is a process, the narratives we employ to inhabit change as the process develops and responds to the other social processes occurring around us. The stories provide a space to inhabit and simultaneously to express the instability of that inhabiting.

As dwellers we are always building, but the land can shift beneath our feet, we are always building on unstable ground. By 'fixing' the stories on paper I was interrupting the dynamic movement of the narrative, highlighting its tenuousness and temporal contingency. This interruption is also a breach of that inhabiting process, it stops the story tellers in their tracks, makes them interrogate their own story and their inhabiting process, draws attention to the fragility of the inhabiting narratives they are constructing.

Another way that the stories articulate tenuousness is in their multiplicity. There are several versions - all true and all fictional to some extent - this is true also for the official historical account. The history of the houses can be pieced together from archival documents and eye witness accounts, even so there will always be room for speculation and differing opinions.

Paul Carter addresses the issue of multiple viewpoints in his analysis of the traces of the stories told by convicts, which he unearths in first fleet journals. His intention is to create for the convicts an historical space drawing our attention to the idea that history is always written with an agenda, and that people or events can be written in or out, or around. A particular perspective can be constructed to sound like the objective truth. Carter asks:

> Is it possible to recover their history? The convict who comes down to us in the pages of his oppressors as a social and political construction: he exists as a reflection of a body of rules, as a personification of transgression, a figure of speech necessary to the ruling class's self-justification and perpetuation of its power. To let the convicts speak for themselves would have been to entertain the unthinkable: mutiny, another history.[40]

Carter goes on to claim that by returning to Botany Bay and examining the writings of first fleet journalists *spatially* ;

> We can recover from enlightenment logic of cause and effect something of what that logic suppressed. In particular we may be able to recover that dimension of the convict's existence which imprisonment and transportation were specifically designed to exclude: his occupation of a historical space.[41]

Carter argues for a *spatial history.* This is an approach that addresses events as they evolve spatially and understands them as "dynamic, material but invisible."[42] They "cannot be delimited by reference to immediate actions let alone treated as an autonomous fact independent of intention."[43]

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[40] Carter, P, Op cit p295
[41] Carter, P, ibid p295
[42] Carter, P, ibid pxxii

The convict tales discussed by Carter present an alternative view. Their stories were noted down by the first fleet journalists as examples of the convicts' difference, they were not seen as capable of intelligent reasoning. Their tales come to us almost by accident, they were not considered worthy of a place in history and are only reported in the first fleet diaries because of their novelty, they were silly, inconsequential. Yet Carter argues that the stories were complex strategic instruments - they were tales of mythical goldmines and rivers - which could be used to challenge the dominant power structures. The officers, in one case, were sent off on a wild goose chase looking for gold that did not exist. Another example given by Carter is of stories invented by convicts attempting to escape. These included tales that they were trying to walk to China. Carter claims;

> Yarns of El Dorado were not spun as a pastime: they were cryptic bids for power. And in this sense, they held up a mirror to the pretensions of those in command revealing to them the rhetorical nature of their exclusive claim to possess the one and only historical truth.[44]

The Tocumwal house stories I am interested in are both true and fictitious, they are a slanted version of an historical event yet they also have a truth - their own truth - this is not the truth of historical fact. Rather the truth of these stories resides in what they tell us about the interests and preoccupations of the tellers, in the truth of their existence and their circulation. The tellers *occupy* by telling.

Carter describes the convicts stories as subversive, a way of claiming power. The stories I have collected appear on the surface to be idle chat, quirky and entertaining, they are also novelties, yet they have their own kind of agency. They move from one mouth to another. By *telling* the stories the tellers raise a series of issues, voice specific interests and concerns, they muse about the significance of having or lacking History, they share stories as a way of telling about themselves. They are saying, this is where I live, this is my story and it connects me to this place, I have put down roots here.

Paradoxically as I have discussed, the Tocumwal house stories articulate the problem that putting down roots, creating a fixed inhabitable space is not actually possible. Their occupation is always tenuous.

Telling the story of the Tocumwal houses, Noel speaks of absences. Noel's story is tinged with a sense of loss or sadness that something so important had outlived its use and had to be pulled down and taken away. Noel goes on to speculate that all the 'absences' in the town itself must be attributable to the same event, he imagines that

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[43] Carter, P, ibid pxxii
[44] Carter, P, ibid p296

empty lots in the town must have been army personnel houses that were also removed at the end of the war. The air force base that his father first spoke about was already absent when he told Noel his story. Noel used the decaying concrete foundations as points of departure in his childhood imaginings. Noel's childhood space is populated with absences, the absence of the physical objects provides a space for stories to germinate. The absent objects are replaced by stories, the spaces are inscribed with the stories Noel tells in the process of inhabiting.

The issue of absence is also raised by Anne, she is concerned over a *lack* of history in Canberra. Anne says "I liked the idea of living in a house with a history, and especially with an odd one. I think I liked the idea because, having lived in Canberra most of my life, it is hard to find places which have much of a history or where the history has been preserved. It seems here that once a story starts to emerge or something starts to look old, interesting or lived in, it's ripped up in favour of paving stones."

Anne's notion of history is intriguing. In the 'new' city of Canberra she looks for something old, or exotic to create a sense of a past, of time passing. She is not concerned about whether or not the story is true, she likes its unusual nature and the fact that the place she lives in is part of a story.

Psychologist Jerome Bruner proposes that "we organize our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative, stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing and not doing, and so on."[45]. For Bruner, "The central concern is not how narrative as text is constructed, but rather how it operates as an instrument of mind in the construction of reality."[46] We construct our world with narrative and in Anne's case she wants to know the narratives of the place she lives in - she wants a history - stories that enable her to inhabit and are evidence of an ongoing inhabiting process associated with the physical objects around her. The narrative moves from the past to the present producing that sense of continuity over time.

Tina Waring presents another example of this. It was she who initially told me the story of the houses, as I mentioned earlier she referred to them as the "Token War Houses", a simple misinterpretation, it may have been hers or could have been passed on to her from a previous teller, either way it is an interesting mutation of language. In Tina's version the connection of the houses to World War Two is highlighted. The phrase Token War

[45] Bruner, J, "The Narrative Construction of Reality" in Critical Inquiry, Autumn 1991 The University of Chicago Press, Chicago p4
[46] Bruner, J, ibid p5-6

Houses affects the telling and interpretation of the story by reinforcing the connection between the houses and the event.

Bruce has a similar experience, mistaking the phrase *Toke houses* as a reference "to a group house where young people smoked pot, (as in to toke on a joint)."[47] Bruce then discovers that Toc short for Tocumwal was (in the version of the story he heard) the site for "an old army resettling camp" and relates being told, "They built this little town to resettle soldiers returning from the second world war, and when they had been properly decommissioned, and the houses were empty, they sent them up to Canberra." I don't quite know where this notion of a resettling camp has come from. I suspect that people were aware of camps such as Bonegilla near Albury, (a camp providing interim accommodation for new Australian immigrants after the second world war) and have somehow confused this with the concept of the air force base, hence the notion of a resettling camp for soldiers.

There is another absence that most of the stories ponder, the absence of the event. The Tocumwal houses were built on an air force base that was never used for its intended purpose. They were never really a decoy town or a resettling camp. It has been inferred that the houses were originally intended as a temporary measure in a housing crisis in Canberra, their foundations were never concreted in. There is an illegitimacy about the houses that I find fascinating.

The stories are fictions which evoke events that occurred in the past; World War II and the settling of Canberra. As memories they are part of the inhabiting process, bringing the past into the now of lived experience, creating a space for the tellers to speculate and work out their own processes of inhabiting.

The image of the house on the back of a truck that I conjured at the beginning of this chapter remains fixed clearly in my mind. It is a powerful image, one that comes back at me from childhood, an unexpected sight on a holiday highway. It bears no real connection to the Tocumwal houses, which were dismantled in order to be transported. They were collapsed, flattened out and reconstructed later. Yet this image in my head provides me with an example of the slipperiness of the stories, an example of how the narratives take on a life of their own. These narrative objects articulate the inhabiting process of the tellers and its inherent tenuousness. Yet the stories also function as memorial objects, circulating in the present, they conjure past events.

[47] for full transcript of Bruce's story refer to appendix 6

CHAPTER 3

Token War Houses

When I first heard Tina's story of the 'Token War Houses' I did not for a moment question the significance of this phrase. It was a title, authoritative. When I went to the ACT Historical society and asked about the houses I was given one photocopied page from a government newsletter on the 'Tocumwal Houses'. At this point the story of the houses gained a different kind of legitimacy, it made sense. Looking back however, the story had already *made sense*. What it did not have until that point was some form of official corroboration.

Those three words - Token War Houses - a slip of the tongue, a mutation, remain significant despite their being shown up as a misnomer. The phrase highlights The War, a big event in Australia's history. The story of the token war houses is a reminder of that significant event - the Second World War - and a story of *almost invasion* . The narrative acts as a memorial object, it reminds the teller and listener of the war - an event often associated with the concept of an Australian national identity - and of the settlement of Canberra in the 1950's. Telling stories brings pieces of the past into the performative present of the oral narrative. By invoking the war, the tellers are musing over an event that is often seen as a defining moment in Australian history, a moment when Australia came of age as a nation. The Tocumwal house stories, as inhabiting narratives, are bound up in the construction of identity, individual and national.

Pierre Nora investigates the relationships between memory, history and national identity in contemporary France. He describes the "acceleration of history"[48] as a situation where our present is slipping ever more rapidly into the past, and is under threat of disappearing permanently. He argues that *sites* of memory are constructed consciously to work against this contemporary tide of forgetting. Nora states:

> Our interest in *lieux de mémoire* where memory crystallises and secretes itself has occurred at a particular historical moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn - but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists. There are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire,* real environments of memory.[49]

[48] Nora, P, Op cit p7
[49] Nora, P, Op cit p7

For Nora *lieux de mémoire* are constructed sites of memory - war memorials, objects imbued with symbolic meaning, public rituals; where remembering is acted out. *Milieux de mémoire* however - according to Nora's definition - are "real environments of memory".[50] They are *organic.* As an example he refers to peasant communities as "that quintessential repository of collective memory".[51] *Milieux de mémoire* in this context are very specific; they are - or rather *were* - spaces where memory existed spontaneously, spaces where memory was negotiated and arbitrated within a coherent community. Nora ties the concept of *milieux de mémoire* in with the notion of a national identity, claiming that a coherent sense of national identity has also been lost as a result of the actions of modernity, globalisation and mass media. He claims: "The coupling of state and nation was gradually replaced by the coupling of state and society. . . history was transformed spectacularly into the self knowledge of society"[52]

Nora links the difference between *milieux* and *lieux de mémoire* to a distinction between memory and history. He associates memory with a kind of organic knowledge, claiming that memory is spontaneous "by nature multiple, yet specific; collective, plural and yet individual. History on the other hand, belongs to everyone and no one, whence its claim to universal authority."[53] Nora invokes the concept of the disappearance of traditional peasant communities as an example of this rupture between memory and historical remembering which aims to "suppress and destroy"[54] memory. He describes the contemporary preoccupation with archiving, collecting oral histories and creating *lieux de mémoire* as a kind of nervous shoring up of memory against a threat of loss, of forgetting. History, in this context, becomes an obsessive process of collecting, labelling and preserving.

Nora's language communicates a sense of loss or sorrow at an occurrence that he describes as a foregone conclusion, the destruction of memory by history. I prefer to think of the two enjoying a far more fluid relationship. Nora's notion of an organic knowledge that has been corrupted is too romantic. I see memory and history as ways of representing the past that are always in a state of flux. Different moments and contexts throw up different ways of knowing and communicating, which is always to some extent partial and fictional.

Whilst I do not agree with the rigid distinction Nora draws between memory and history, his discussion of *lieux* and *milieux de mémoire* is useful in the context of the Tocumwal

[50] Nora, P, ibid p7
[51] Nora, P, ibid p7
[52] Nora, P, ibid p11
[53] Nora, P, ibid p9

house stories. I consider the stories about the houses to be evidence that *milieux de mémoire* do exist. However they are *not* the *milieux* that Nora describes as organic - but they are *real* communities of memory.

Nora's *milieux de mémoire* may be a mythical construction altogether. He describes these *real environments* of memory in France as somehow having existed in a coherent, organic form untouched by the obsessive self questioning of historiography. They began to disappear simultaneously with national identity at the beginning of the Twentieth century when Historiography – the history of history - began to anxiously "assign itself the task of tracing alien impulses within itself and discovered that it is the victim of memories which it has sought to master."[55]

It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss whether Nora's claims about the nature of French history bear up under investigation. However it is important to be clear about how he uses the terms *lieux* and *milieux de mémoire* as I have borrowed the phrases and am utilising them for my own purposes. The difference is that I am arguing that there can be such a thing as a *milieu de mémoire* in contemporary Australia. However my notion of *milieux de memoire* is defined thus: They are *real environments* of memory, yet they are environments that are fluid, multiple and open to differing interpretations. Nora uses the United States as an example in contrast the France claiming that:

> In the United States, for example, a country of plural memories and diverse traditions, historiography is more pragmatic. Different interpretations of the Revolution or of the Civil War do not threaten the American tradition because, in some sense, no such thing exists—or if it does, it is not primarily a historical construction.[56]

Australia can be viewed in much the same way. As a nation which has also been colonized, issues of national identity, immigration policies, and the politics of race and religion are continuously being negotiated and reworked. When I say that there can be such a thing as a *milieu de mémoire* in this context I am arguing that memory and remembering are still actively engaged with by members of the community. The activity of remembering has not been wholly consumed by History with a capital H.

The history of the Tocumwal Houses is significant to address in this light as it operates on a number of levels. I have chosen to look at a series of slender narratives, but there are also the houses themselves and an archive of documents contributed by the residents of the O'Connor precinct to take into account. The *stories* operate as memorial objects and

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[54] Nora, P, ibid p9
[55] Nora, P, ibid p9

sites of memory, they are constructed by the tellers yet also have a certain spontaneous movement through the community.

The stories themselves are not *lieux de mémoire* in the strictest sense of the phrase. Nora states that "*lieux de mémoire* originate with the sense that there is no spontaneous memory, that we must deliberately create archives, maintain anniversaries, organise celebrations, pronounce eulogies because such activities no longer occur naturally."[57] For Nora, sites of memory are very consciously constructed with the aim of remembering in mind. He uses as examples "Museums, archives, cemeteries, festivals, anniversaries, treaties, depositions, monuments, sanctuaries, fraternal orders."[58]

There is no *official* state or community agenda in the construction of the Tocumwal house stories - they more closely reflect Nora's definition of memory - simultaneously collective and individual. They circulate through the community as speculation and gossip, they are imbued with each teller's preoccupations and concerns, they are memorial objects and evidence of *milieux de mémoire.* They indicate a communal form of remembering, they are serious fictions which are constructed and renovated continuously.

The Tocumwal houses - on the other hand - operate as *lieux de mémoire.* They are the subject of an archive - a site of memory in itself - and of local government research into the heritage value of the houses. This research has resulted in a report on their significance to local history and a set of guidelines stipulating what should and should not be done to the houses by way of renovation or improvement. The value of the precinct is partly determined by its visual coherence - it stands out as a separate entity within the suburb. The local planning authorities are interested in preserving this visual identity. The two distinct sets of four cul-de-sacs backing on to the open grassy section of land that has been used communally by the residents since the houses were first erected is unique. It stands out from the predominant grid pattern of the rest of the suburb. The houses are also seen as intact examples of post war, pre-fabricated housing, and are historically significant for this reason.

This perceived heritage value has been taken up by the local real estate industry who advertise the title of 'Tocumwal' houses as an attractive feature. The houses operate as *lieux de mémoire* because they have been constructed into publicly recognised historical objects. They are being preserved in order to keep history alive.

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[56] Nora, P, ibid p10
[57] Nora, P, ibid p12
[58] Nora, P, ibid p12

Does my process of collecting the stories on paper conform to this notion of *lieux de mémoire*? I am not particularly interested in constructing an historical document or saving these stories from being forgotten. I am more interested in pondering the ideas the stories throw up. However I have sought to capture the stories on paper as a way of having evidence - proving they exist. It is important here to differentiate my own process of collection from the tellers' process of inhabiting by telling. The only reason the stories exist on paper is as an aid to my project, in their *original state* the stories circulate endlessly mutating as they move, the traces I am dealing with are not the actual objects, but fragments pulled out of circulation.

The stories on paper become traces - evidence of the existence of *milieux de mémoire* - they are not part of the *milieux* themselves because they have been plucked from that context, consciously written down. I do not consider these texts to be *lieux de mémoire* either, I am not using them as a device against forgetting, but as examples which indicate the simultaneous processes of remembering and forgetting and of truth in fiction. Where Nora sees *lieux de mémoire* as evidence of the disappearance of *milieux de mémoire* I see the two as existing in a relationship of co-dependency.

The story tellers tell their stories, casually they enact the process of inhabiting socially, remembering is an essential part of this process. They may be aware of the existence of the archive and their stories may be fuelled by information that has come from the archive. The archive is not simply a space into which information is poured so that it not be lost, it is in dialogue with the community. Its existence does not remove from people the need to engage in the social activity of remembering.

I have so far argued that the Tocumwal stories are evidence of the existence of *milieux de mémoire*, but I have not explained how the stories operate as memorial objects. In telling his story Noel claims the absences of the buildings that once were an air force base as a personal link to the war, a big event in history. He points out that he was never told at school about the important part that the area he lived in played in the war. The base was indeed a response to the 'Japanese threat,' a heavy bombing base which would serve in the last ditch effort if the worst outcome were to be realised.

The absent base in Noel's story becomes an invisible or silent memorial, a different kind of object from the officially sanctioned government approved variety. It is a memorial that exists through faulty knowledge and popular narrative, it speaks in a meandering fashion and is passed from person to person by word of mouth carrying with it the preoccupations of the teller and the wider preoccupations of the cultural context within which it is being told.

The absences and silences generate speculation, the gaps are not closed but explored, traversed. When I use the word silence I am thinking of it spatially. In Noel's narrative the silence, the absences, inscribe the landscape of his childhood. These spaces are like rests in a musical score, they make room for something else and throw the present and visible into relief.

How does this unofficial memorial function in other ways than the official memorials? Or does an invisible memorial simply extend or push further notions of commemoration and the questions that perpetually circle war memorials? Do absences become remembered and talked about because they create a space for multiple viewpoints? There is a sense with the Tocumwal house story that it is 'owned' by the teller, it is not subject to the rhetoric that is associated with 'official' monuments constructed by governments - and those in positions of influence - its meaning is not dictated from above, it is not constructed as the result of some kind of political agenda. This is not to say that the Tocumwal stories are not political or free of specific agendas. The politics they represent is the personal politics of popular narrative, as I argued in chapter one, these stories are inhabiting enacted, they are colonizing narratives.

To further explore how the stories function as memorial objects I will discuss an official *lieu de mémoire* and examine the differences and similarities between the physical and officially constructed memorial and the unofficial seriously fictional construction of the popular narrative.

The town of Oradour-sur-Glane in France is literally a site of memory. During the Second World War 642 men, women and children of Oradour were massacred by Nazi troops. The only residents left alive were eight individuals who managed to escape the massacre and a handful more who had been away from town for the day.[59]

Oradour has been officially preserved as a *lieu de mémoire*. Nora describes *lieux de mémoire* as "moments of history torn away from the movement of history. Indeed, it is this very push and pull that produces *lieux de mémoire* - moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned; no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded."[60] Sarah Farmer explores the example of Oradour and the attempts which have been made to "freeze a particular moment in time"[61] to keep the ruins of the town in a state of just post massacre. Farmer

[59] Farmer, S Oradour: Martyred Village p1(to get details)
[60] Nora, P Op cit, p12
[61] Farmer, Op cit, p

argues for the inherent impossibility of arresting time and memory. She says that "Just as memory is continually reworked and reorganised, memorial sites never stand still."[62] Oradour is the site of a real and devastating event, it has been set apart. This is a place where people come to pay their respects. It attests to the horror of the war, it functions as a *lieu de mémoire* in more ways than one. Farmer describes the different functions of the town - the "ruins constitute the historical monument,"[63] the cemetery which is away from the town and not so heavily visited by tourists, is a site of mourning for the locals who come to remember the individuals they knew and loved. For the locals, the town and surrounding landscape is also:

> imbued with memories and emotional associations related to personal and family history. For them the ruins are not just a scene of destruction but the scene of their youth; this landscape has deep meanings quite apart from the political or historical significance developed by the official commemoration.[64]

Farmer refers to Oradour as a *lieu de mémoire,* yet in making the above point she also describes how the memorial has a life.

The Tocumwal stories commemorate neither a tragedy nor a great victory, they speculate vaguely about the war. In Bruce's story the houses were part of a resettling camp, in Anne's and Simon's a decoy town in the desert. For Noel the absent houses spoke of something great and sad at the same time. For Tina the Token War Houses had a poetic and evocative name. The stories do not operate as conventional memorials they do not provide us with a place to visit or a warning about the excesses of human nature.

The memorial function of Tocumwal house stories has parallels with what Ian Buruma describes as an *invisible memorial.* Buruma describes German *warning monuments,* memorials specifically devoted to the Jews who died in the Holocaust. They are constructed to *warn* the population that they should remember the atrocities of the Second World War and guard against anything like this occurring again. In this context he introduces the notion of the invisible monument, an idea generated by artist Jochen Gerz. Buruma says of Gerz:

> He was critical of conventional memorials and monuments which beautify the place by casting history in bronze, as it were, thus turning personal meaningful remembrance into a communal ceremony. This, he argued, was just another way of suppressing the past. The representation of history replaces memory itself,

[62] Farmer, ibid p11
[63] Farmer, ibid
[64] Farmer, ibid p100

> especially after the witnesses are gone; it hinders personal reflection. The question is: How do you visualise memory? Gerz's answer is: You don't.[65]

Gerz created his own invisible monument in a street in Saarbrucken which used to contain a gestapo prison. He carried out a research project unearthing old Jewish cemeteries in Germany. He then lifted the paving stones in the street opposite the site of the prison and, on each, inscribed the name of a cemetery and the date he discovered it, he then replaced the stone with the inscription facing down into the ground.[66]

This notion of an invisible monument is particularly interesting in relation to the Tocumwal House stories. The invisible, the imagined, speak about absence. The stories I have collected remind us of the war, they do so vaguely, unlike Gerz's memorial which has a very specific function. Yet the stories are invisible in that they are not tangible. The 'invisibility' is powerful because it allows individuals to conjure their own mental images. The imagined images - exotic - mysterious - are all the more potent for being imagined, they are owned by the minds that created them. They are different to a 'real' object - a memorial cast in bronze, constructed according to someone else's design or agenda because they are intensely personal.

The Tocumwal stories use the houses as physical hooks - we do not need to see the houses, but the fact that physical objects exist links the stories to something concrete. What the stories commemorate is a significant event in Australian history. It was the first time Australia as a nation was seriously under threat of invasion. The *War* is referred to as a defining moment when we pulled together as a country and defended ourselves against the invaders. Both of the world wars are surrounded by such mythology, by the image of the Australian Digger, of heroic deeds and wartime sacrifices.

War memorials are significant objects both in Australia and abroad. In all the wars in which Australia has participated, most of the action has taken place far away in exotic locations. Annette Hamilton argues that a memorial to Australians who worked on the Burma/Thailand railway in Thailand "is important for the continuing and developing cultural narratives around the theme of 'Australia at war,' central to the historical constitution of 'Australian national identity". Memorials can confirm generally held views and uphold mythology as well as providing sites for remembering and mourning.

Hamilton goes on to say that today there is something more going on when people visit memorials. She talks of the "new 'memories' in new generations puzzled by the

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[65] Buruma, I, The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan 1995 Meridian New York p205

excesses of the past, the attitudes of their seniors, the mysterious glamourisation of war as somehow central to being, particularly to being Australian".[67] The Tocumwal house stories locate the Second World War *here* they remind the listener of just how close we came to invasion.

All of the people who have told me stories about the Tocumwal houses were born after the occurrence of the Second World War, for them *The War* has a mythical status. Noel laments his lack of knowledge as a child of the importance his area played in that big story. This status of "founding myth" adds to the exotic nature of the Tocumwal stories - they are important because they are connected with a big event, telling the stories connects the tellers to that event.

There is something else here, why these stories and why now? They are not merely about the past, they bring the past into the present. The notion of a threat to nation and national identity is being played out nightly on the television news. There are complex political debates waged in the media over issues of immigration, the relationship between the indigenous and non-indigenous inhabitants of Australia and how the country is situated in a global context.

This notion that there can be a single *national identity* is an interesting one. Nora argues that the 'conquest and eradication of memory by history has had the effect of a revelation, as if an ancient bond of identity had been broken and something had ended". He goes on to argue that "the equation of memory and history" is related to the replacement of "the coupling of state and nation" with the "coupling of state and society". National identity gets lost along with traditional remembering.

In Australia the notion of the possibility of constructing national identity has always been complicated. It is something that has been worried over - argued about - ever since colonization, the Tocumwal stories take up this issue obliquely, pondering over the possibility of invasion. This is what I mean when I say that the stories are memorialising an event that did not occur. The tellers think back to that moment, that point in time - like every single moment - when an alternate history was still possible, when Australia might have become something else. They are reminded of the tenuousness of their settlement.

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[66] Buruma, I, ibid p205

[67] Hamilton, A "Skeletons of Empire: *Australians and the Burma - Thailand railway,* Memory and History in Twentieth Century Australia eds Darian-Smith, K & Hamilton, P 1994 Oxford University Press, Melbourne p111

The Tocumwal Stories do not so much aid in the construction of one National Identity as provide a space for the tellers and listeners to ponder the question. The stories are evidence that people construct their own identity with reference to a sense of communal past as well as their individual past, and that the concept of nation contributes to their self construction as an individual.

The actual houses are becoming *lieux de mémoire,* sites of memory. They are developing a particular identity as *historical* objects, objects which will be preserved as examples and reminders. The stories, with their strange slippery habit of changing, of being about Token War Houses, resettlement camps and Norwegian prefab architecture are evidence. They are traces that appear unofficially in the form of gossip, slender narratives that circulate in *milieux de mémoire.* Not the authentic *milieux* that Nora constructs, but the faulty, constructed and continually changing *milieux* that are popular culture.

Conclusion

> In modern Athens, the vehicles of mass transportation are called metaphorai. To go to work or come home, one takes a "metaphor" - a bus or a train. Stories could also take this noble name: every day they traverse and organise places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories.[68]

One of the things that fascinated me initially about the Tocumwal house stories was their movement. I heard similar but different versions of the stories in a number of places, I observed the stories moving around from person to person, appearing in different contexts, at different times, told as part of a daily process of inhabiting. I could almost trace the stories from one person to the next. My project however, was not to be an exercise in mapping the literal movements of the stories, it would not have been possible as the tellers were often vague about who had told them the story in the first place, by the time I was asking, the stories seemed to be part of the public domain, there was no single point of origin I could trace them back to.

In the first chapter I argued that in telling these stories, the narrators were engaging in the process of inhabiting. The stories created a conceptual space for speculation and interpretation, and inscribed the physical surroundings with personal points of reference. Inhabiting is a social process, we do not simply live as individuals, we engage with a community, articulate a place for ourselves within or in response to the community that surrounds us. The six stories I collected for this paper varied dramatically. The presence of the houses is the consistent element. Each of the individuals told a story that someone else had told them, yet in retelling they constructed the story anew making it their story, simultaneously evidence of an individual and collective inhabiting process. Noel and Leeanne in particular, inscribed their environments with their stories creating a space for themselves in a city they did not grow up in. They imported their memories and created local physical reference points for them.

Yet the stories also articulate the instability of the inhabiting process. This paradox, this drive to construct an inhabitable space - a space to put down roots and belong - and the inherent impossibility of achieving stasis, of being completely comfortable fascinates me. It makes me think of one of Greg Dening's titles: "Teasing Moments Make for Histories".

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[68] de Certeau, M, The Practice of Everyday Life, p115

The Tocumwal stories provide us with *teasing moments*. They give us the opportunity to explore a series of ideas. Their slenderness and fictional nature allow for speculation and interpretation. Dening highlights the importance of this sort of talk when he says

> Cultural living in its bare bones is talk, talk translated into all sorts of symbols. . . The talk is not just talk. It is presentation. Timing makes it so; punchlines, too; ambience; gestures; silence; presence; rhythm; fast flows and discontinuities; engagement with an audience; rhetorical forms, sometimes as old as culture itself, sometimes raw and new.[69]

Dening describes how our lives are organised by narratives, how we gossip and converse, how our relationships are built on talk.

My story has ruminated on absences and gaps, it has traced a series of slender, fleeting narratives. I have pondered the significance of the houses as memorial objects, how they enable the past to be casually in the present, part of daily inhabiting. Their absence from the town of Tocumwal and the intangibility of the stories themselves makes them invisible monuments.

And what of the houses? They remain where they are, wooden houses, lacking the substance and permanence of double brick. Memorials; their myths and rumours situate them, weaving them into the fabric of here and now, of the suburban streets. Settled in amongst the shrubs, they remind us of our tenuous habitation, keeping our pasts present. We arrive at a kind of ending, this episode is coming to a close. But these stories will continue to move and change, becoming more densely embroidered with the preoccupations of the tellers, shifting Chinese whisper style through time and space, adding invisible patinas of meaning to the artefacts themselves.

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[69] Dening, G, Performances, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne 1996, p34

Appendix 1

Tina Waring

'Token War' Houses

I first heard about 'token war' houses when a new housemate spoke about the history of his last house. The version of the story I heard was:

Out in western New South Wales a town/suburb of houses were built as a decoy city during World War Two. There were lit up at night to deceive Japanese bombers. The town was transferred to O'Connor after the war.

I have retold my version of this story many times.

Appendix 2

Noel Quanchi

"I grew up in a small country town called Finley which is 20 Kilometres north of the township of Tocumwal in the southern Riverina of NSW.

As a youngster we would travel through Toc as it was known on our way to Melbourne, in the distance you could see the old Aircraft Hangers to the Air field that is now used for a gliding school. You would also pass [the] Fuel Depot that stored Aviation Fuel. My father told me that was one of the largest Air Bases used up until the end of WW2 and was instrumental in the protection of Australia from the Japanese. I do not know how true this was but it makes a good story that a father can tell there son.

From that story I could imagine a large Airforce base with a large population. When I was at high school I used to visit a friend that lived in Toc on weekends and we used to muck around town a lot. We would go out to the Gliding School as you could get free flights in the plane that towed up the gliders. All around the hangers you could see the remnants of concrete slabs and roads and vandalised Fibro buildings that used to be toilet blocks. I remember asking one of the pilots what had happened to all the buildings and he said that when the base was closed they were trucked away.

This again created some interest to me as it seamed to be a sort of waste of something that was grand and no longer fitted the needs of the day. From this point I noticed that the township was quite large in size but had a lot of empty blocks which I thought was odd, as you would think that they would fill the holes before building a new street and in a country town they do not build new streets every day. Also for a small town that once has a large Airforce population there was no empty or vandalised towns, that's when it clicked that the houses in town for the personnel went as well.
When studying the war at school we were never told of our areas important part in WW2. In addition we came to Canberra for a school excursion and we never told of our areas history in all the accommodation being moved to Canberra to assist with the settlement of the Nations Capital at an important growth stage.

I moved to Canberra in 1983 and did not know of the Tocumwal homes until approximately 1992 when flicking through a real estate section of the Canberra Times I saw advertised a TOCUMWAL HOME as though it was something trendy. I went and had a look for curiosity value and realised that the house looked like many other homes that are in Tocumwal and not unlike my friends Uncles house that I used to visit. From that point I put 2 and 2 together to realise that when they dismantled the base that the houses were transferred to Canberra to provide accommodation in the 50's"

Appendix 3

Leeanne Crisp

I have always liked the look of these houses. They reminded me of my grandmother's house in Rochester, Victoria, where we occasionally visited as children. Most of the holiday was on our uncle's nearby farm but Grandmother's house held some fascination. There was a certain degree of mystery at the uncertain world the adults inhabited. Being in this house often seemed fraught with anxiety for one reason or another to do with family relationships which we as children were not party to. I still liked the idea of visiting however as the trips were a great adventure.

The house itself, was painted wood with stained glass windows near the front door which let in an incredible ultramarine blue light. It was usually dark inside.

Much later I visited Norway where I delighted in the painted wooden houses. This experience was accompanied by the recognition of likeness - that my brothers in fact looked quite Norwegian. There was the family story that my maternal great grandfather was a Norwegian sailor who had jumped ship and stayed in Australia. This had always appealed to me because our German surname from my fathers grandparents was always coloured for me with subtle prejudice. The houses represented an 'architectural connection' with this other side of the family.

Then in Canberra they were also in the next suburb. Someone told me the story, that these kit houses in fact had been imported from Norway. I liked this as there seemed to be a material connection here for me. For a long time I felt displaced in Canberra because we have no relatives here. But I felt a connection to the houses.

Appendix 4

Anne McNevin

I don't actually know the name of the houses I'm talking about but they're a bunch of houses in O'Connor, one of which I used to live in, (2 Quinn Street) in a group share arrangement for about 8 weeks in late 1996. I shared with Simon Gane and Caitilin Wall, who had been living in the house for about a year, I think, and Simon told me the history of the houses. He said that they had originally been built in Darwin during World War II and set up together as a ghost town to attract Japanese bombers. Later, maybe in the 1950's or 1960's the houses had been transported somehow to Canberra. I can't remember why or if Simon knew a reason either. I didn't think much about wether or not the story was true or even feasible, I just liked the idea of it. I wondered why on earth Canberra had been chosen as the houses' new home.

The next I heard about these houses was an exhibition about them that was being held in one of the houses down the road from mine which doubled as some sort of family centre. I think that was in December 1996 or January 1997, but can't be sure. I meant to go and have a look but never got around to it.

I was interested in the story because I liked the idea of living in a house with a history, and especially with an odd one. I think I liked the idea because, having lived in Canberra most of my life, it is hard to find places which have much of a history or where the history has been preserved. It seems here that once a story starts to emerge or something starts to look old, interesting or lived in, it's ripped up in favour of paving stones.

I told a few people about the houses but not many. I told them basically what Simon had told me. Now I tell people that story plus the story that my friend Kate is researching the urban myths surrounding the houses.

Appendix 5

Simon Gane

I was told that the house I was living in at Quin St, O'Connor was actually shipped down to Canberra from the Northern Territory somewhere in the 1950's. I think it was somewhere near Alice Springs. Anyway the story goes that the house was originally built as a decoy for Japanese bombers in World War II.

The government of the day built heaps of these houses and set up what looked like a town with lights, roads etc. This was to divert any potential Japanese bombing raids away from hitting habitated areas.

Appendix 6

Bruce Taylor

Tocumwal - Houses in Canberra

Myself and a group of friends used to live in a house in Todd St O'Connor, this house was well renowned as a centre for debauchery and general merriment.

Amongst the many pleasures to be found here was a garage with a skylight. This skylight presented the occupants with the opportunity to pursue a favoured hobby, the growing of marijuana, of which almost all was consumed on the premises. This activity was well known to a large number of hangers on, and as such increased the numbers of hangers on in the household manyfold.

So to the issue of my discovery of the history of our house, one friend who used to hang around in the general Haze that was Todd St had arranged for an aunt to pick him up from our house, anyway to cut to the chase, there was a knock on the door, which I answered, there was the Aunt, and as usual, behind me the pungent smell of hooch following me out.

I called her nephew out, and said hello to the Aunt, as "Nephew" reached the front door the Aunt said, "Oh you like in a Toke house" at which me and "nephew" looked at each other in surprise, thinking she was referring to a group house where young people smoked pot (as in to toke on a joint).

Don't ask why we both thought this but it was evident by the looks on both our faces that we were thinking exactly the same thing.

The "Aunt" taking the looks on our faces for bewilderment, which to a certain extent they were, explained further.

"You know, Tocumwal houses from the old army resettling camp in Tocumwal," and went on "They built this little town to resettle soldiers returning from the second world war, and when they had been properly decommissioned, and the houses were empty, they sent them up to Canberra ' by way of further elaboration, "The houses dears, the houses, they cut them up and put them on trucks and drove the whole town up the highway as there was a shortage of material to supply the desperate needs of the capital." - p.s this is purely a remembered version of the conversation and certainly not word for word. But this is how I first heard about the "Toke" houses.

Endnotes

1. This quote from Tina Waring is one of a six of texts I have collected from contributors. For full accounts see appendix 1
2. Nelmes, MV Tocumwal to Tarakan: Australians and the Consolidated B24 Liberator, Banner Books, 1994 p65
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11. For full transcript of Noel's story see appendix 2
12. Oxford Dictionary of Current English, Oxford University Press, New York 1992 p454
13. Heidegger, M, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" in Basic Writings, New York : Harper & Row, c1977 p323
14. Heidegger, M, Ibid, 325
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18. Heidegger, M, Ibid, 325
19. Best, S "Substantial Reflections: The Video Sculptures of Joan Brassil" Eyeline 39 Autumn/Winter 1999
20. Carter, P, The Road to Botany Bay: *An Essay in Spatial History*, Faber and Faber, London, Boston, 1987 pxvi
21. Carter, P, Ibid pxxii
22. For Leeanne's entire account see appendix 3
23. For Anne and Simon's accounts see appendicies 4 & 5
24. Miller, D, Op cit p33
25. Carter, P, Ibid, xiv
26. Boyd, R Australia's Home
27. Carsten, J and Hugh-Jones, S About the House: *Levi-Strauss and Beyond*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996 p37
28. Malouf, D, 12 Edmondstone Street, Penguin Books, Victoria 1985 p10
29. Malouf, ibid p8
30. Malouf, ibid p3
31. Carsten, J and Hugh-Jones, S, Op cit p37
32. Carsten, J and Hugh-Jones, S, ibid p37
33. Carsten, J and Hugh-Jones, S, ibid p46
34. Bhabha, H, Op cit p198
35. Bhabha, H, ibid p198
36. Bhabha, H, ibid p198
37. Bhabha, H, ibid p198
38. Clifford, J, Op cit p10
39. Clifford, Ibid p112-113
40. Carter, P, Op cit p295
41. Carter, P, ibid p295
42. Carter, P, ibid pxxii
43. Carter, P, ibid pxxii

44. Carter, P, ibid p296
45. Bruner, J, "The Narrative Construction of Reality" in Critical Inquiry, Autumn 1991 The University of Chicago Press, Chicago p4
46. Bruner, J, ibid p5-6
47. for full transcript of Bruce's story refer to appendix 6
48. Nora, P, Op cit p7
49. Nora, P, Op cit p7
50. Nora, P, ibid p7
51. Nora, P, ibid p7
52. Nora, P, ibid p11
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54. Nora, P, ibid p9
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1997 • *Aprons* - Working Drawings, Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Manuka

Group exhibitions

1999 • *Glue* - Gallerie Constantinople, Queanbeyan
• *Colour My World: Canberra Contemporary Art Space Members Exhibition* - CCAS, Canberra
1998 • *Point of Departure* - Installation/performance, Next Wave Festival, Melbourne and Canberra National Sculpture Forum
• *Know Your Signs* - from the Community Education Initiative, Selected Project exhibited in the 1998 Canberra National Sculpture Forum
1997 • *AAAR* - Australian artists against racism collaborative exhibition, Canberra School of Art Gallery Foyer
• *Room* - Installation produced in collaboration with Tina Waring, Strathnairn Gallery, Canberra
1996 • *Spirit House* - Site specific installations, Gorman House Festival of Contemporary Art, Canberra
• *Floriade Sculpture Exhibition* - Floriade, Canberra
• *Space Cadets* - Graduates in residence exhibition, Studio One, Canberra
1995 • *Finnish* - Graduating student exhibition, Institute of the Arts Gallery, Canberra
•Graduating Sculpture Students Exhibition, Sculpture Workshop, Institute of the Arts Canberra
• *Site Specific Installations*, Group 11, Gorman House Canberra Festival of Contemporary Arts
• *Art Implant*, National Botanical Gardens, Canberra, Canberra National Sculpture Forum
1994 • *Phrick Art* - Chiang Inn Plaza Chiang Mai, Thailand

Group Performances

1999 • ACME presents *A Quiet Drink With Friends* - All Bar Nun, Canberra
• *Withdrawing Room* - in collaboration with Emma Jean, Canberra School of Art Foyer Gallery
1998 • *Construction/Renovation Project* - in Collaboration with Emma Jean, Canberra School of Art Foyer Gallery
1998 •ACME *addresses the Object* - Canberra National Sculpture Forum, National Gallery of Australia
1997 •ACME presents *A Night at the Flicks* - August, Electric Shadows Cinema Canberra
•ACME perform at the opening *Archive And The Everyday* - Old Parliament House Canberra
1996 •ACME meets Splinters in Faust*The Heat of Knowledge* - University House, Australian National University, Canberra.
•ACME presents *D Block* - October, Festival of Contemporary Arts Gorman House Arts Centre, Canberra.
•ACME presents *D Block* - July, Performance Space Sydney
•ACME presents *Back Yard Performances* - O'Connor Canberra.

Residencies

1996 •Graduate in residence in the Sculpture Workshop, August and September whilst working on Floriade Sculpture Project
•Graduate in residence April - July, Studio One, Canberra. (EASS Award)

Grants/Awards/Commissions

1998 •Canberra School of Art, Postgraduate Student Materials Grant
•Arts ACT grant to Point of Departure to assist with producing works as a fringe event to the Canberra National Sculpture Forum and as invited artists in the Next Wave Festival in Melbourne
•Arts ACT grant to ACME inc to produce two public performances in 1998
•Arts ACT grant to the Community Education Initiativ e assist with mounting a public art project to be exhibited as part of the Canberra National Sculpture Forum

1997 •Pat Corrigan Artist Grant to assist in covering the costs of mounting the exhibition "Room" with Tina Waring

1997 •Commissioned work for the Australian Science Archives Project, "Cabinet of Curiosities" made in collaboration with David Nugent

1996 •ACT Cultural Council grant awarded to Group Eleven to assist in the production of installation works for "Spirit House" exhibition, Gorman House, Canberra, 1996
•ACT Cultural Council Grant awarded to Group Eleven for collaborative sculpture work exhibited in Floriade, 1996
•Healthpact - Canberra School of Art Student Sculpture exhibition, materials grant for artwork exhibited in Floriade, 1996

1995 •Interiors Australia acquisitive prize (Emerging Artists Support Scheme Award) awarded December 1995
•Studio One inc Residency award (Emerging Artists support Scheme Award) awarded December 1995

Reviews/Articles

1998 •Muse, Canberra' s Art Monthly, April, Interact With Sculpture, article by Priscilla Henderson
•Canberra Times, 14 April, Signs of the Times, article by Cassie Proudfoot
•Canberra Times, 7 April, A Fleeting Glimpse of Inner City Living, review by Myra McIntyre

1997 •Muse, Canberra's Art Monthly , September - ACME inc. performance "A Night at the Flicks" reviewed by Sarah Roberts.
•State of the Arts April - July. The RTZ - CRA Cabinet of Curiosities, a collaborative project between eight artists (including myself) and the Australian Science Archives Project appears in the article New Images by David Malin

1996 •The Canberra Times, Friday October 3 - ACME inc. performance "D - Block" reviewed in Sending up the World of Work by Allana Maclean

Reviews/Articles published

1999 • *Muse* - April, article about *Metis* - Festival of Science and Art, and profile on participating artist Joan Brassil
• *Muse* - March article *Faces of a Nation,* and review of Suddenly the Lake, CMAG

1998 • *Muse* - October review of Applied Relativity installation, CCAS
• *Muse* - September review of Restorative Digestion Desired performance, Juniperberry Restaurant
• *Muse* - May 1998 review of Haake Herrman Was WA Wa performance at CCAS

Relevant Employment History

1999 Project Manager for installation of *Gondwana and the Cosmos - Listening to the Dead Stars Singing.* Installation by Joan Brassil as part of *Metis* - Festival of science and art

1999 Gallery Assistant, Canberra School of Art Gallery

1997 - 99 Technical Officer, Canberra School of Art, Art Theory Workshop.

1997 - 99 Business Manager, Art Association of Australia

1996 - 98 Administrative Secretary, Institute of the Arts Student Association

Other Professional Activities

1998 - 1999 Student Representative, Canberra School of Art Gallery Advisory Committee
Public Officer for ACME inc